REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 85-111 are hereby canceled and replaced by new claims 112-117 which Applicants believe are patentable and allowable over the prior art of record as discussed in detail below.

For the Examiner's information, two other applications are currently pending in Group Art Unit 3713 that are commonly owned with the subject application. An Information Disclosure Statement will be filed separately to cross-cite references that have been cited during the prosecution of copending U.S. Application Nos. 10/354,174, filed January 30, 2003 and 10/754,598, filed January 12, 2004. These two applications, while not being directly related as Continuations for example to the subject application, nevertheless contain some subject matter that is common to subject matter in the subject application. The parents of these applications are noted in the subject application's specification at page 7, lines 32-35. The '174 application is a Continuation in a chain of applications that goes back to U.S. Application No. 08/540,328, which issued as U.S. Patent No. 5,688,174, already of record. The '598 application relates back to U.S. Application No. 08/885,276, also of record as WO 99/00162.

With respect to the prior art rejections set forth in the Office Action, the canceled independent claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 as being anticipated by either U.S. Patent No. 5,762,552 to Vuong et al. or U.S. Patent No. 5,823,579 to Goldberg et al., while the various dependent claims were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentable over Vuong et al. or Goldberg et al. in view of a number of other references.

Applicants respectfully submit that new claims 112-117, which are substantially more detailed than the canceled claims, are patentable over these references. Claim 112 highlights the key features of the invention which are neither disclosed nor suggested in Vuong et al. or

Goldberg et al. These include the use of a single game processor to execute a multiplayer video card gaming program and at the same time, communicate player station activity information to a remote monitoring computer. As discussed in the specification, the use of remoter monitoring computers is standard in casinos where hundreds of single player gaming machines are employed. A location controller interfaces the machines to the monitoring computer for this purpose. Applicants devised the claimed multiplayer game using a single personal computer-based system that greatly simplifies the complexity of the system and reduces cost. However, the system employs player stations that are simple I/O type terminals with at best, a player station processor that is much like a keyboard processor and merely generates codes in response to player and currency inputs, for example. Such player stations cannot communicate directly with a remote monitoring computer or be controlled thereby. Nevertheless, the same requirements apply to these player stations that apply to any gaming machine in a casino. The remote monitoring computer must be able to monitor all activity at each player station and be able to disable individual player stations if they are not operating correctly or if a security event occurs, such as opening of a money pit door.

To solve the forging problem, the present invention employs a game processor that not only executes the multiplayer gaming program but also communicates with the remote monitoring computer. However, to avoid overtaxing the game processor, the job of responding to game and security events and activity is still performed by the remote computer. Thus, for example, if a money pit door is opened at a player station, which can only occur legitimately when a casino employee opens the door, the game processor receives a code from that player station and , in response, sends a message to the remote computer. In response, the remote

computer sends a command back to the game processor identifying the player station in question and telling the game processor to disable that player station.

All of the foregoing features and functionality of the invention are present in new independent claims 112 and 117. Neither Vuong nor Goldberg disclose or suggest the recited arrangement and interaction of the remote computer with the game processor, the later of which executes a multiplayer game and displays the outcome of the same on a single monitor. In contrast, Vuong et al. disclose a system where, in one embodiment, a plurality of individual gaming machines can play a game with each other, with one machine acting as a game server in conjunction with a network manager that determines winning and losing bets. In other words, each of the machines and the network manager take part in actuation of the game while only the game processor in the claimed subject invention executes the game in response to inputs received from the player stations. The remote monitoring computer in the claimed subject invention does not take any part in determining which player wins or loses. As for Goldberg, this reference teaches a computerized blackjack game in which a plurality of gaming stations allow multiple players to each play an individual game of blackjack with the computer. However, in the claimed subject invention, the game processor executes a common game with all of the player stations and displays the game play on a single common monitor. In addition, contrary to the Examiner's assertion, Goldberg's item #28 in FIG. 1 is not a control computer but is simply a database for storing player and other information. Thus, Vuong et al. and Goldberg et al. clearly fail to disclose or suggest the key elements of claims 112 and 117.

Furthermore, the Examiner has cited U.S. Patent No. 5,497,479 to Hornbuckle for the proposition that it would be obvious to use a player station disabling function in view of the teachings of this reference. Applicants respectfully disagree. Hornbuckle merely discloses that

it is known to disable a cable television subscriber's set top box if they have not paid their bill. This has absolutely nothing to do with control of a casino game in general, nor does it suggest the specific concept of disabling a casino game if improper operation is detected, such as opening of a money pit door. Still further, the combination of references fails to disclose or suggest the specific concept of instructing shut down of an individual player station in a multiplayer video card gaming system by sending such commands from a remote computer to a game processor, which then carries out the task.

The dependent claims further define the invention over the prior art and independent claim 117 combines all of the features recited in these claims with those recited in claim 112. Claim 113 specifically recites that the remote monitoring computer sends a shut down command to the game processor in response to receipt of a message that a player station's money pit door has been opened. Claim 114 specifies that the game processor is implemented with a personal computer, while claim 115 recites that each player station includes a game processor for generating personal computer compatible codes in response to actuation of input devices, etc. These features combine to reduce costs of the system as a single PC based game processor can execute a game involving multiple simple terminals, which results in revenue generation equivalent to multiple stand alone computerized systems. Finally, claim 116 recites that metering means are also employed for monitoring game play activity as a whole for the multiplayer game, as opposed to the metering of individual player stations, which is also provided by each of the player stations. This feature is also neither disclosed nor suggested in the prior art of record.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the new claims are patentable and allowable over the references of record. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application are therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

By: William A. Blake

William A. Blake
Reg. No. 30,548

JONES, TULLAR & COOPER, P.C.
P.O. Box 2266, Eads Station
Arlington, VA. 22202
(703) 415-1500
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